

Call for Papers and Projects

DIALECTIC, a refereed journal of the School of Architecture, CA+P, University of Utah

Dialectic VIII: Subverting – Unmaking Architecture?

Deadline:

June 1st, 2019

Requirements:

Abstract (350 words)

Short CV

This book is dedicated to authority

—Le Corbusier, May 1933

In 1933, the father of modern architecture, Le Corbusier, infamously dedicated his pamphlet for *The Radiant City* to “Authority.” But he is of course not the only architect to fall under the spell of “authority.” His cynicism is akin to other architects’ retreats into “a-political” professionalism or “autonomous” aesthetics. Each of these forms of retreat amounts to a defeatist stance—that society gets the architecture it deserves. What about practices that oscillate in between, can they be regarded as subversive actors?

Subverting requires the presence of long established regimes to undermine, corrupt, unsettle, destabilize, sabotage, or pervert. There is no shortage of such regimes with the discipline of architecture. Our subversive efforts might take on its legal, professional, educational and authorial conventions.

A primary way to consider subversion in architecture could be to address the legality or illegality of spatial interventions. How can we rewrite the laws, rules, regulations, and codes of architecture to get out of the stranglehold of power and authority? What lies beyond conventional architectural practice—“outsider architecture”? Mere building? Spatial practice? Appropriation? An authoritarian urge is inscribed into the very name of the discipline. So should we rather, following Gordon Matta-Clark, speak of “anarchi-ecture”? What are the models for non-authorial and non-authoritarian forms of practice? Can we learn from informal economies where architects and building codes are absent? How can we think of subverting as a practice that moves beyond avant-gardist claims of termination, erasure, destruction, of blowing up buildings, or burning them down (with a nod to the radical beginnings of Coop Himmelb(l)au – “architecture must burn”)?

What are the best ways to subvert the current capitalist model of architectural practice? Might these show the way toward a new architecture? What are some of the models for innovative economies of designing and building places, working relationships, organization of the planning and building process? On the one hand, in some of the most sustainable practices like GLUCK+ (New York), the office’s focus has not taken the form of the right commission but the right economics of design practice. On the other, architects like Arif Hasan (Karachi) are subverting the traditional role of the architect and planner as experts of the built environment, in favor of the spatial production of other actors—trained and licensed or not. Henri Lefebvre reminded us that spaces and buildings have always been produced or “secreted” by groups and societies. With the contemporary turn toward crowd organization, authorless cooperation, and of the (digital)

commons, we ask what lessons can be learned for spatial production. Are there suggestive examples of spaces being made and unmade by users and the public?

“Learning” is yet another field of inquiry within subversive activities. Post-colonial studies have long identified education as the most powerful instrument of colonizing the mind. The global spread of the Western pedagogic model of scientific rationalism has impoverished the architectural mind by marginalizing—if not outright delegitimizing—competing forms of knowing and wisdom about the physical world. It is not only “outsiders,” “insiders” too have critiqued Eurocentrism at the heart of architectural imagination. Horkheimer and Adorno have argued that the Enlightenment carried both the emancipating and oppressive impulses of bourgeois society. Canonical education is silent on social engagement beyond the Western model of the architect as the designer of plans, detached from—but superior to—their execution by builders, contractors, craftswomen. We therefore ask educators, students, and practitioners to share modes of spatial practice and building culture that critique the Western figure of the architect as technician, expert, scholar, researcher or ingenious artist.

Finally, particularly valuable for the renewal, expansion, or unmaking of architecture is the scholarship of Michel de Certeau, who set aside the strategic nature of planners and designers in favor of the tactical action of users, renters and consumers of urban space. Of special interest are reports on acts of co-option, of poaching on the property of others and spaces of the powerful, of in-action, and of unfinished business beyond the fetishes of “design” and “object”—rather than form, let’s focus on affect, effect and the performance of architecture. Consider sending stories about time, the temporal, the ephemeral, or tactical pockets within the cloak of authority. We will value contributions that turn upside down, inside out, flip the perspective, and honor the unsung users, makers, consumers and appropriators of the built environment.

Dialectic VIII invites articles, reports, documentation, and photo essays on subverting architecture and its unmaking. Following the thematic issues of *Dialectic II* on architecture and economy, *Dialectic III* on design-build, *Dialectic IV* on architecture at service, *Dialectic V* on the figure of the vernacular, *Dialectic VI* on craft and making, *Dialectic VIII* on citizenship and decolonizing pedagogy, this 8th issue will gather examples of subversive activities. It will reflect on actions that have successfully undermined the discipline’s elitism, machismo, whiteness, and bourgeois-ness.

The editors value critical statements and practices that hold a mirror to our disciplinary culture. We hope to include instructive case studies and exciting models for spatial practices. Possible contributions may also include mapping of ongoing debates across the world, and reviews of books, journals, exhibitions and new media. Please send abstracts of 350 words and short CVs to Ole W. Fischer fischer@arch.utah.edu, Michael Abrahamson abrahamson@arch.utah.edu, Shundana Yusaf shundana@arch.utah.edu and Anna Goodman good7@pdx.edu by **June 1st, 2019**.

Accepted authors will be notified by June 15th. Photo essays with 6-8 images and full papers of 2500-3500 words must be submitted by August 15, 2019, (including visual material, endnotes, and permissions for illustrations) to undergo an external peer-review process. This issue of *Dialectic* is expected to be out in print by fall 2020.

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